

ABC WORLD NEWS TONIGHT
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BRIEFING BOOK

DONALDSON: Key officials from former President Carter's 1980 re-election campaign today made available to ABC News a copy of the briefing book prepared for Mr. Carter's debate with Ronald Reagan in an attempt to demonstrate that the material Reagan officials acknowledged they obtained in some fashion from the Carter camp was important to the debate's outcome, an assertion the Reagan officials strongly deny. DONALDSON: The book made available to ABC News consists of, among other things, suggested themes for the debate and Carter's strategy objectives. It contains extensive pages of sample questions and answers, for instance, question, 'How would you compare your economic revitalization program with Governor Reagan's tax cut proposal?' The suggested answer covers two-and-a-half pages, ranging from his proposal would over-inflate the economy to it would benefit the rich. The book also contains key lines for Mr. Carter to say about Mr. Reagan, and a section on Reagan positions and how they might best be attacked during the debate. The book, made available by former Carter campaign officials, certainly fits the description of the material as described in Time magazine reporter Larry Barrett's book which first brought the matter to light. Wrote Barrett, 'After the debate was over, the Reaganauts realized that the papers provided by their informant had included every item Carter used on the air except one, his reference to his daughter, Amy.' But this description of the material they had is contested now by Reagan officials. White House Chief of Staff James Baker says it did not seem to be close-in briefing material, but rather a compendium of Carter administration positions. And Communications Director David Gergen describes it this way. GURGEN: We've said already on several occasions it was not significant.

DONALDSON: The Carter officials insist the detailed briefing book made available today is the only briefing material they used. Reagan officials strongly suggest that is certainly not the material they have. The question of how important the material actually was may not be directly relevant to the investigation of how the Reagan camp obtained it; that is, whether it was stolen or not, but it may have a bearing on how serious investigators and the public view the entire episode.